

## Chapter 21

### From *The Communist Manifesto*<sup>1</sup>

#### Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels

*The Communist Manifesto* was written in 1848 in the midst of European upheaval a time when capitalist industrialization had spread from England to France and Germany. Marx and Engels were Germans who studied and worked in France and England. In the *Manifesto*, they imagine a revolution that will transform all of Europe.

- What do they see as the inevitable causes of this revolution?
- How, according to their analysis, is the crisis of “modern” society different from previous crises?
- Were Marx and Engels correct?

#### *Thinking Historically*

Notice how Marx and Engels describe the notions of capitalism and industrialization without using those words. The term capitalism developed later from Marx’s classic *Das Kapital* (1859), but the term bourgeoisie [bohr zhwah ZEE] as Engels notes in this selection, stands for the capitalist class. For Marx and Engels, the industrial revolution (another later phrase) is the product of a particular stage of capitalist development.

- If Marx and Engels were asked whether capitalism or industry was the principal force that created the modern world, what would their answer be?

*The Communist Manifesto* is widely known as the classic critique of capitalism, but a careful reading reveals a list of achievements of capitalist or “bourgeois civilization.”

- What are these achievements?
- Did Marx and Engels consider them to be achievements?
- How could Marx and Engels both praise and criticize capitalism?

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### **Bourgeois and Proletarians<sup>2</sup>**

The history of all hitherto existing society is the history of class struggles.

Freeman and slave, patrician and plebeian, lord and serf, guildmaster and journeyman, in a word, oppressor and oppressed, stood in constant opposition to one another, carried on an uninterrupted, now hidden, now open fight, a fight that each time ended, either in a revolutionary reconstitution of society at large, or in the common ruin of the contending classes.

In earlier epochs of history, we find almost everywhere a complicated arrangement of society into various orders, a manifold gradation of social rank. In ancient Rome we have patricians, knights, plebeians, slave;

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<sup>1</sup> Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels, *Manifesto of the Communist Party* (Arlington Heights, Ill.: Harlan Davidson, 1955). Reprinted in the Crofts Classics Series.

<sup>2</sup> In French *bourgeois* means a town-dweller. Proletarian comes from the Latin, *proletarius*, which meant a person whose sole wealth was his offspring (*proles*). [Ed.]  
[Note by Engels] By “bourgeoisie” is meant the class of modern capitalists, owners of the means of social production and employers of wage-labor; by “proletariat,” the class of modern wage-laborers who, having no means of production of their own, are reduced to selling their labor power in order to live.

1 in the Middle Ages, feudal lords, vassals, guildmasters, journeymen, apprentices, serfs; in almost all of  
2 these classes, again, subordinate gradations.

3 The modern bourgeois society that has sprouted from the ruins of feudal society, has not done away with  
4 class antagonisms. It has but established new classes, new conditions of oppression, new forms of  
5 struggle in place of the old ones.

6  
7 Our epoch, the epoch of the bourgeoisie, possesses, however, this distinctive feature: It has simplified the  
8 class antagonisms. Society as a whole is more and more splitting up into the two great hostile camps, into  
9 two great classes directly facing each other – bourgeoisie and proletariat.

10  
11 From the serfs of the Middle Ages sprang the chartered burghers of the earliest towns. From these  
12 burgesses the first elements of the bourgeoisie were developed.

13  
14 The discovery of America, the rounding of the Cape, opened up fresh ground for the rising bourgeoisie.  
15 The East-Indian and Chinese markets, the colonization of America, trade with the colonies, the increase in  
16 the means of exchange and in commodities generally, gave to commerce, to navigation, to industry, an  
17 impulse never before known, and thereby, to the revolutionary element in the tottering feudal society, a  
18 rapid development.

19  
20 The feudal system of industry, in which industrial production was monopolized by closed guilds, now no  
21 longer sufficed for the growing wants of the new markets. The manufacturing system took its place. The  
22 guildmasters were pushed aside by the manufacturing middle class; division of labor between the  
23 different corporate guilds vanished in the face of division of labor in each single workshop.

24  
25 Meantime the markets kept ever growing, the demand ever rising. Even manufacture<sup>3</sup> no longer sufficed.  
26 Thereupon, steam and machinery revolutionized industrial production. The place of manufacture was  
27 taken by the giant, modern industry, the place of the industrial middle class, by industrial millionaires –  
28 the leaders of whole industrial armies, the modern bourgeois.

29 Modern industry has established the world market, for which the discovery of America paved the way.  
30 This market has given an immense development to commerce, to navigation, to communication by land.  
31 This development has, in its turn, reacted on the extension of industry; and in proportion as industry,  
32 commerce, navigation, railways extended, in the same proportion the bourgeoisie developed, increased its  
33 capital, and pushed into the background every class handed down from the Middle Ages.

34  
35 We see, therefore, how the modern bourgeoisie was accompanied by a corresponding political advance of  
36 that class. An oppressed class under the sway of the feudal nobility, it became an armed and self-  
37 governing association in the medieval commune; here independent urban republic (as in Italy and  
38 Germany), there taxable “third estate” of the monarchy (as in France); afterwards, in the period of  
39 manufacture proper, serving either the semifeudal or the absolute monarchy as a counterpoise against the  
40 nobility, and in fact, cornerstone of the great monarchies in general – the bourgeoisie has at last, since the  
41 establishment of modern industry and of the world market, conquered for itself, in the modern  
42 representative state, exclusive political sway. The executive of the modern state is but a committee for  
43 managing the common affairs of the whole bourgeoisie.

44  
45 The bourgeoisie has played a most revolutionary role in history.

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<sup>3</sup> By *manufacture* Marx meant the system of production which succeeded the guild system but which still relied mainly upon direct human labor for power. He distinguished it from modern industry which arose when machinery driven by water and steam were introduced. [Ed.]

1 The bourgeoisie, wherever it has got the upper hand, has put an end to all feudal, patriarchal, idyllic  
2 relations. It has pitilessly torn asunder the motley feudal ties that bound man to this “natural superiors,”  
3 and has left no other bond between man and man than naked self-interest, than callous “cash payment.” It  
4 has drowned the most heavenly ecstasies of religious fervor, of chivalrous enthusiasm, of philistine  
5 sentimentalism, in the icy water of egotistical calculation. It has resolved personal worth into exchange  
6 value, and in place of the numberless indefensible chartered freedoms, has set up that single,  
7 unconscionable freedom – Free Trade. In one word, for exploitation, veiled by religious and political  
8 illusions, it has substituted naked, shameless, direct, brutal exploitation.

9  
10 The bourgeoisie has stripped of its halo every occupation hitherto honored and looked up to with reverent  
11 awe. It has converted the physician, the lawyer, the priest, the poet, the man of science, into its paid wage-  
12 laborers.

13  
14 The bourgeoisie has torn away from the family its sentimental veil, and has reduced the family relation to  
15 a mere money relation.

16  
17 The bourgeoisie has disclosed how it came to pass that the brutal display of vigor in the Middle Ages,  
18 which reactionaries so much admire, found its fitting complement in the most slothful indolence. It has  
19 been the first to show what man’s activity can bring about. It has accomplished wonders far surpassing  
20 Egyptian pyramids, Roman aqueducts, and Gothic cathedrals; it has conducted expeditions that put in the  
21 shade all former migrations of nations and crusades.

22  
23 The bourgeoisie cannot exist without constantly revolutionizing the instruments of production, and  
24 thereby the relations of production and with them the whole relations of society. Conservation of the old  
25 modes of production in unaltered form, was, on the contrary, the first condition of existence for all earlier  
26 industrial classes. Constant revolutionizing of production, uninterrupted disturbance of all social  
27 conditions,